

Milestones

Catholic Courier
April 23, 1998



Brother Luis Ruberte, H.Ch., (right, both photos) meets with Deacon Eliseo Melendez April 16 to plan a bilingual retreat to be held at Clinton Correctional Facility in Clinton, N.Y. Brother Ruberte will retire as director of the diocesan Office of the Spanish Apostolate June 30.

Brother walked with Hispanics

Retiring priests

.....2a-3a

Priest jubilarians

.....4a, 5a, 8a

Bishop Hickey

.....6a

Sisters of St. Joseph

.....6a, 7a, 8a

Sisters of Mercy

.....9a

School Sisters of Notre Dame

.....9a

Gwynns' 70th anniversary

.....10a

Anniversaries

.....10a-12a

Diocesan Director of the Office of the Spanish Apostolate, Brother Luis Ruberte, H.Ch., said that when he came to live in Rochester, he was offered a suburban apartment. But he turned it down to live in the North Clinton Avenue area, the heart of the city's Hispanic community.

"Because I worked with the community, I wanted to live in the community, to be one of them," he said.

The 63-year-old lay brother has been "one of them" for 17 years now, but plans to retire June 30. Brother Ruberte intends to return to Puerto Rico with his wife, Ramona. The couple has four grown children and 13 grandchildren.

Brother Ruberte reflected on his life as a lay brother in an interview with the *Catholic Courier* in the Spanish Apostolate Field Office, 875 N. Clinton Ave., Rochester.

Brother Ruberte belongs to a Puerto Rican-based lay order of married men and women known as the Congregation of St. John the Evangelist. But the congregation is better known as Hermanos Cheos (Brothers of Cheo) because both its founders were named "Cheo," a Puer-

Rican version of José, Brother Ruberte explained.

Many Spanish priests left with Puerto Rico's Spanish rulers when the United States won Puerto Rico during the Spanish-American War, Brother Ruberte noted. Hence, a lay order like his was needed to sustain Puerto Rican Catholics bereft of priests.

"When you read the history of the Catholic Church in Puerto Rico, you have to read the history of this congregation," he said of his order, which is based in Brother Ruberte's home diocese of Ponce.

Brother Ruberte, 63, grew up in Penue-las, Puerto Rico, in a farming family with 10 brothers and sisters. He served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War, and following his discharge in 1956, he attended the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico in Ponce near his hometown.

Although he described his family as no more religious than the next one, he remembered that he participated in such groups as the Legion of Mary and the Holy Name Society as a young man. He

added that while he was at the university, he worked for the leader of Hermanos Cheos. He was invited by the man to join the order, so Brother Ruberte decided to do so in order to give "service to the community, to try to keep the faith in the community, and to try to help the community grow in faith."

Brother Ruberte served his congregation in Puerto Rico through preaching and evangelizing until 1977, when his superior sent him to work on behalf of Hispanic Catholics at a parish in Pennsylvania. He came to Rochester four years later after being hired to head its Spanish Apostolate.

Brother Ruberte said his order's mandate is to sustain Puerto Rican Catholicism both spiritually and culturally. But it's apparent from his accomplishments here that his work has expanded that mandate, since Brother Ruberte has not only aided his fellow Catholic Puerto Ricans, but other Spanish-speaking Catholics as well. The apostolate also works with Catholics from such countries as Mexico, the Dominican Republic, El

Continued on Page 4A

Story by Rob Cullivan • Photos by Greg Francis